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[2492]

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Hongkong, 1st November, 1891.

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The Daily Press.  
HONGKONG, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1891.

The letter by the Rev. GRIFFITH JOHN, reproduced in another column, gives further information to the spread of the infamous anti-foreign literature emanating from Hongkong. Mr. JOHN writes on information supplied by a native friend, and his evidence is therefore only hearsay, but the Rev. gentleman's name is a sufficient guarantee that the source of his information is reliable. The important statement in the letter is that the famous "Death to the Devil's Religion" and two other books of a similar character are being preached everywhere, by command of the Prefect of Changsha, at all the theatres by Siu-tai graduates. That many of the officials secretly sympathise with the spread of the anti-foreign literature is well known, but we have here a charge brought against one of them of direct complicity, which ought to be exhaustively enquired into. If it can be proved that the Prefect has given the slightest active encouragement to the propagation of the libels on foreigners and their religion which have been poisonously injected into the minds of the common people and inciting them to riotous outbreaks, his punishment and removal from office ought to be insisted upon by the Foreign Ministers. It is stated that 820,000 copies of the "Death to the Devil's Religion" have been printed for gratuitous distribution. Certain characters are given as the names of the men at whose expense this has been done, but it appears these are not real names and that the characters are intended to be so read as to amount in themselves to a fulmination against foreigners. There is no difficulty, however, in getting at the shops through which the books are distributed, and the Prefect of Changsha, Mr. JOHN, some time ago called attention to the dissemination of these publications at Huangpi, with the result that the matter was once taken up by the Viceoy, and no further trouble is anticipated in that district. This is satisfactory so far as it goes, but it is important that the source of the evil should be exposed in Hunan itself, and no time ought to be lost in acting upon the information supplied by Mr. JOHN in his last letter. While the minds of the populace are inflamed by pol-

sonous literature there can be no security against outbreaks such as have occurred of late along the Yangtze Valley and which at Wusun caused the loss of two valuable lives.

This Government has abandoned the proposal to establish a jinrikisha farm and has determined instead to raise the licences fee. The present fee is \$36, and next year it is to be \$32. As the number of licences issued is 500 the increase in revenue from this source will amount to \$18,000. The farming system was objected to on the ground that it created a monopoly, and there is a good deal to be said in support of the objection, but there is practically a monopoly at present, the only difference being that it is in the hands of a small coterie instead of in those of a single individual. While the number of licences is limited it is not open to any man who thinks he would like to go into the jinrikisha business to do so, unless he can buy out some present licensee. All monopolies those that are not formally recognised as such are the most mischievous, and the proposal to place the jinrikisha monopoly in the hands of one man appeared to us not an unwise step, promising as it did an increase in revenue and the prevention of abuses that might possibly arise under the present system. Monopolies of all kinds being objectionable, however, would it not be well to remove the restriction on the number of licences and allow the law of supply and demand to have its play, checking undue growth in the number of vehicles by increasing the licence fee? The traffic is well able to bear a fee of \$72 and probably a good deal more. The present fee being only \$36, it will be seen what large profits must have been made by the owners of the vehicles, who if must be remembered are not the drivers. The latter have to hire the vehicles at as much per diem, and the owners naturally fix the rate as high as they can. The position of the coolie will in no way be altered by the change in the licence fee, for he already pays all and cannot be squeezed any further. If a fair had been established the Government might have been able to exercise some benevolent supervision over the terms made between the farmer and the coolie, but at present the latter is entirely at the mercy of swindlers. The only difference resulting from the increase of the licence fee will be that a portion of the coolie's earnings will be transferred from the pocket of the jinrikisha owner to the coffers of the Government, and seeing that the owner will still receive a very handsome return on his capital there is no hardship in the case. The policy of the Government should be to keep on increasing the fee until the applications for licences fall to somewhere near the same level as the number of vehicles considered necessary for the traffic, which is at present fixed at five hundred. The matter might also be dealt with from the opposite direction, by reducing the legal fares, but these are already fairly low, and the increase of the licence fee appears the wiser measure. While touching on the question of fares, however, it may not be out of place to suggest that it would be well if the coolies were made acquainted with the fact that there is such a thing as a legal scale. They know that ten cents for a chair and five cents for a jinrikisha are the rates for short distances, but when they get beyond that they have very little idea of what their proper fare is, and if they have a stranger or new comer to deal with they make most unconscionable demands. Every chair bair and jinrikisha coolie ought to be compelled to carry a card bearing the legalised scale of fares in English and Chinese, to which reference could be made in case of dispute. It might be possible also to introduce some amendment in the scale, which at present is arranged strictly on a time basis, while the coolies themselves think a great deal more about the distance. The legal charge for a chair for half-an-hour is ten cents, but if the coolies were carrying the whole of that time they would make a great "bobby" if they were not given more; on the other hand, for a short run that only occupies them a few minutes they will accept five cents, although they are largely entitled to ten. It would not be difficult to arrange a scale that would work without friction, but if a copy of the scale, such as it is, were accessible in every chair and jinrikisha it would facilitate the settlement of disputes, and visitors to the Colony would be saved much extortion and waste of time.

The following is the business at the Legislati-

ve Council to-morrow afternoon:

Session reading of the Further Appropriation Bill for 1891.

Committee on the Bill entitled the Merchant Ship Consolation Ordinance, 1891.

The following is the business at the shops:

Committee on the Bill entitled the Merchant Ship Consolation Ordinance, 1891.

At the Magistracy yesterday, Charles Short, a police sergeant in the Naval Yard, was charged with stealing \$210 monies belonging to the Naval Yard Police canteen, with which he had been entrusted by virtue of his office, between Oct. 1st and Nov. 1st. Inspector Leyshant, Mr. Robinson, continuing quoted several cases, including the case of Weston v. Currie, in which he said he put no weight whatever on the judgment in favour of the Lord Chancellor. His Lordship said if they were not to be guided by any authority that possible good was thereby done to the cause.

Mr. Robinson said he had no more respect for the Lord Chancellor's opinion than for that of the Emperor of Russia.

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